

Dear parents

The Governing Body of Sinfin Community School has met a number of times to discuss the idea of the school converting into an Academy. This means that it is independent of the Local Authority and run by another organisation. In this case there is an expression of interest from Derby College to sponsor and govern the school. Both governors and staff at the school do not believe that this is in the best long term interests of the school.

Despite the government's intention to promote Academies as the answer to problems found in inner cities the evidence does not support this view. Pricewaterhouse Cooper has undertaken some detailed research that indicates that most of the success found by the academies is due to them selecting brighter pupils from less disadvantaged areas and entering them for easier qualifications at KS4. The other advantage associated with an Academy of a new building and fresh image will be available to us from next summer anyway.

Currently Academies are targeted at schools that have results at KS4 where fewer than 30% of students gain 5 or more higher grades including English and maths. Ironically only 3 of the 21 academies have yet to meet this target. Happily we are on course to meet this target with 32% of our current year 11 students in sight of gaining these grades. Before the fire, 27% of our students met this target in 2005.

Because Academies can opt out of the pay and conditions for staff the teaching unions are firmly opposed to the concept. Accordingly both of our major teacher unions have met locally to state their objections which might possibly lead to some form of industrial action. It is also very likely that some of the best staff will seek position in other schools resulting in a fall in results.

The governance of the school would be run by 7 governors from the College/Sponsor with only 1 parent governor from the local community. We feel that this will make it less responsive to the needs and interests of parents.

Whilst the potential financial input into the school is significant (almost £2 million over a number of years) and could be spent for the benefit of students, the other alleged benefits of independence from the local authority (LA) are misleading. The school already has the opportunity to offer the full range of courses at KS4, we can recruit and appoint staff without the LA's approval and we have the potential to learn from other organisations and have recruited a new Business Manager to assist in this process. The support of the LA following the fire was extremely valuable in ensuring that the school was safe and secure with good temporary accommodation and their role in securing the £21 million new build should not be overlooked. We are also working with other schools and colleges to provide a wide range of opportunities at KS4, OFSTED described this as outstanding when they visited last week.

To conclude, the governors are asking parents to join them and the staff to resist any move to become an Academy. The school has had enough upheaval recently and is now back on course to make the improvements that all our students deserve. There will be a

meeting at Sinfin Community School on Tuesday 6th November at 6pm to discuss these issues with parents wishing to find out more.

Yours sincerely
Jem Hudson
Chair of Governors